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A

CALM AND SERIOUS REPLY

TO THE

ADDRESS

OF

THOMAS SMITH, ESQ.

WITH SOME

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

ANSWER

OF

AN OLD MAGISTRATE.

By an Impartial Citizen.

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TO

THOMAS SMITH, Esq.

S I R,

A LIBERAL education, an acute genius, and a comprehensive understanding, have given you a command over language which few men enjoy. The seemingly illiterate magistrate who made a reply to your late council address, used a style suited to his capacity, and which he probably imagined most became the circumstances of the occasion: he wrote intrigue, dishonour, and duplicity, in every sentence, to express his meaning, in the same manner as a wretched painter would deform the most beautiful picture by daubing;—here is moss, there is grass. But every character, in appearance, should fit his profession. Flowing robes only grace the accomplished senator, the shield and the helmet
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the warlike foldier, and clothes of many colours the mercenary bankrupt.

You begin your address by informing the public, that you were persuaded those matters which you intended to unfold would prove both interesting and agreeable. Interesting they certainly are, but I am much afraid they have been disagreeable to many. To show that the capital of your native country is in a state of bankruptcy, is certainly not one of the most pleasing discoveries ; nor is the attempt to prove the fact one of the most laudable labours : it neither merits a seat in Parliament, nor even a pension upon the apostate's list.

You next insinuate that Convener Ranken, amongst others, accused you of having formed a plot. This conveys a sneer equally worthy of your character, as it was descriptive of your intention. It is of little moment to the public to enquire by whom the charge was conceived. I only ask, whether or no it be true, and of what species the plot was ? Was it a plot of treason ? was it a plot of sedition ? was it a plot of overturning the religion of the country, and joining the missionary tribe ? or, was it, as you yourself assert,
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a plot to display before the public the melancholy state of the finances of Edinburgh? No, Sir; it was none of these. Firmly convinced of your loyalty, I cannot allow you the epithet of a traitor, or disturber of the peace; and if I can divine your sentiments on religion, you are not entitled to the company of Haldane or Hill. The scurrilous reply of the Old Magistrate clearly proves your only intention was to become city representative yourself.

Your next reflection is, that, as Convener Ranken owed his high rank in the Council to your personal labour and exertions last year, he ought to have been the last man to forsake you. This, Sir, is a peevish expression of resentment, and by no means accords with that sober discretion you usually consult: it would have graced the pages of the Old Magistrate, but not those of Mr Smith. Even although Mr Ranken had been inconsistent, which was not the case, it could not have tended in any shape to exculpate you.

The address next proceeds to an attack upon Mr Hay's character, and a defence of your own. It would have been more consistent, perhaps, to have confined yourself to the last.

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But anger has some claim to indulgence, and railing is usually a relief to a disappointed mind. You seem to be a lawyer as well a banker, Sir, and therefore know upon what occasions a talent for misrepresentation should be exerted.

Your motive for abolishing the usual city election dinner, and for regulating the petty disbursements in the Council Chamber, as a means of increasing the revenue of the town, recalls to my memory a whimsical proposal suggested by the late Earl Howe, (who, notwithstanding, was a brave admiral, and a good man, though not a politician,) of decreasing the national debt, by depriving the clerks of the Admiralty of their customary Christmas gift, viz. a quire of paper, a red letter-book, and a dozen of quills! Mr Dalrymple's idea of cutting off one or two of the yearly public entertainments, and to drink no French wine, was a measure certainly proper and worthy of his character.

With respect to the statement you have given of the city's revenue; as I never was a magistrate, or a counsellor, I must stand excused from making any observations upon their accuracy, farther than, as you yourself have told

told us, the council books were unintelligible to the Lord Provost, to Mr Gray, and to Mr Buchan, as well as to Chamberlain Hay. I may reasonably presume they were equally mysterious to you; otherwise your known abilities, and the apparent accuracy with which the several articles of expenditure and revenue seem to be stated, would confirm me in the truth of the melancholy states your ingenuity has produced; but, from your own expression, I am entitled to regard them as a snare to the unwary.

When at Michaelmas 1796 you became a member of the Lord Provost's committee, you had a commanding example of every great qualification in the person of Mr Elder. Conscious of his own integrity, the conduct of that venerable magistrate in council was directed by nothing but the virtues of justice and equity. He considered himself as independent both of the city representative and the factions of council. He was heard by both with deference and respect. The citizens of Edinburgh looked up to him as their protector, and he regarded them as his children. When it was the will of Providence

to afflict him with disease, he submitted to his misfortune with feeling, but not without dignity. The tears of his country were the mourners of his death. Consider for one moment that illustrious character; think what he was in this country, and then reflect upon yourself.

Admitting, however, that you deserted by mistake those principles which ought to have directed your conduct, and that party which introduced you into council; let us see with what industry and activity you have been carrying your schemes into execution.

From day to day, from week to week, and from year to year, you have deferred, by your own unfought confession, every plan that could have the smallest effect upon meliorating the affairs of the city. Motion upon motion was the only proof you gave of your abilities; protest upon protest that of your judgement.

The variety of remarks which have been made upon the Old Magistrate's answer, and upon the name of the writer, naturally induced me to examine, with more than ordinary care, the contents of his letter, notwithstanding the shamefully scurrilous style he
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has adopted. Now, Sir, I found every fact stated by him to be literally true. I not only discovered that Mr Hill and Mr Hart, but Messrs Henderson, Gilchrist, and Wright, were repeatedly teased by your messages; and that the party you wished to introduce into Council was most inimical to the interest of Mr Dundas. How, therefore, can I give ear to that fulsome applause which you bestow, in the style (if I may be allowed the rude and vulgar expression) of a sycophant upon your worthy representative?

Mr Smith, if I was your personal enemy, I would pity and forgive you. You have every claim to compassion that can arise from the disappointment of your intentions. Your disgrace from the Town Council of Edinburgh, of itself, would disarm a private enemy of his resentment, and leave no consolation to the most revengeful temper.

But for the account you have given of the city revenue and expenditure, you have no claim to indulgence. Nothing less than a solemn recantation can possibly heal the wound you have given to the finances of this town; nor will any thing else be accepted of as a vindication of your conduct. Recollect, Sir,

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the grief, the misery, and the distress, your pamphlet has occasioned ; remember how many widows, how many orphans, what aged and infirm, have all their future dependence placed in these funds. Was it to produce these melancholy effects you abandoned the Elder interest ? Was it for this you have given up your best friends, and incurred the displeasure of the Right Hon. Secretary ? I only speak the truth, and candidly state a fact you have committed, which strikes directly at the happiness of the inhabitants of Edinburgh. I should be sorry that you would imagine I attempted to blast your reputation by indirect or ambiguous insinuations. Probably, if you are revengeful enough to take advantage of the provisions in a certain Act of Parliament which the necessity of the times has occasioned, you may find out both who the Old Magistrate and I are. But supposing we are known, whether will you or we approach the Cross with most confidence ? Will the public regard a person, who has attempted to prove their city in a state of bankruptcy, in the same light with those who have come forward and endeavoured to detect his designs ? A candid acknowledgement of your faults

faults can alone save you from the reproaches even of the lowest of the people. To the world this will appear to be, at least, one honourable action of your life. If you do not, experience, I fear, will inform you of the necessity of retiring from that capital which you wish to represent now, as quickly verging towards the precipice of ruin.

I thank God that no impudence under the shape of human being will be able to deny this charge I have fixed upon you, nor your enmity towards Mr Dundas; not you yourself, nor your friend Richard Roe, be he who he will. Even the countenance of your confidential companion the hosier, appears to fail him, and he seems to blush whenever the name of the Exchange is mentioned.

But I am afraid your principles have taken root too deeply, and that you will not condescend to make the public those generous amends, which an incumbent duty, and the injury you have done them, require. I suspect you have listened too long to the advice of certain friends, with whose mercantile interest perhaps you are closely connected, and who probably were the means of misleading you in your late unaccountable conduct.

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The road of virtue is, however, always open; repentance never comes too late. Remember, although the scurrilous, though honest, Old Magistrate, has declined all future connection with you, other batteries more formidable may open.

AN IMPARTIAL CITIZEN.

C. STEWART & CO. Forrester Wynd.

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